

# SOCIAL ACTION

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SEPTEMBER 1952

*Franciscan Inspiration*

*Catholics in Trade-Unions*

*Gospel Democracy*

*Re-arming Hearts*

As. 6

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# SOCIAL ACTION

VOL. 2 No. 6

SEPTEMBER 1952

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## HERE AND THERE

### *Warp in Olympics*

From a survey of public opinion, it is not clear whether the Helsinki display was a sports competition or a conflict of political ideologies. With totalitarian communism, science, publicity, sport, everything has a political colour. By reaction the other countries emphasize the nationalist view as glaringly and as regrettably. That is how the Helsinki tournament turned into a skirmish of the cold water.

What has happened to sport under Red Fascism is of little direct interest. But what should be a matter of great concern for us is the deterioration which has marked the evolution of sports on our own side of the Iron Curtain. In the good old days sport was sport; with capitalism it developed into a financial enterprise; with the spread of democracy it grew tainted with communalism and politics. In former times people were satisfied that victories were won on points; in recent years quite a few expect them to be won on votes. Organised cheering, booing and whistling, invading the field, assaulting the referee, all such modern incidents betray the deterioration of sports in bet-ridden democracies. There is less and less sporting spirit in sport.

### *Social Rehabilitation of Sport*

This gradual impairment of sports calls for the attention of social workers; sports play an important part in

solving the vast problem of leisure. It is hardly worth our while to attempt humanizing conditions of employment in factories and offices if we abandon the leisure so secured to impulses and conventions that are little in keeping with human dignity.

Sports should prove a healthy exercise for body and mind, afford relief from the day's toil, foster neighbourliness and favour a cultural tone which meets man's sense of honour and disinterestedness. Not all forms of entertainment would pass such a test and social workers have not been slow in denouncing certain films, dances, readings, etc. But even from among the athletic sports which are popularly regarded with favour, there are types which are less acceptable.

The entertainment (?) which has been the object of the most adverse comments is boxing, and it was most severely castigated in the U.S.A. where it is most popular. Last year the quarterly *Theological Studies* took up the ethical point of view and Fr. E. Hillman squarely analysed the moral features of boxing. He narrowed down his study to professional prize-fighting but boldly condemned it as sinful. His arguments are impressive, though we must expect promoters, prize-fighters and spectators to be shocked and not a few educationists to be amazed. As boxing is growing in vogue in India under the plea of sport modernisation and as prize-fighting is already included in the programme of the 1954 Asian games, his views are worth summarizing.

### *Evils of Prize-fighting*

Fr. Hillman first argues that a prize-fighter regularly intends to knock out his opponent or at least to make him punch-drunk. But depriving another of his consciousness violently is to deprive him of his specifically human powers, it is to de-humanize him, an evil which recalls the evil of perfect drunkenness, an evil which is more deliberate and calculated in boxing than in the case of alcoholic excess.

Moreover the modern promoter wants a crowd and in order to draw a crowd he wants "Punchers" so that sports-writers may blatantly advertise the "smashing", "savage", "slaughtering" blows. But with the improved technique of punching, there has grown the number and gravity of head injuries, hemorrhage, blindness, mutilation, and brain concussion, which are regularly intended as shortcuts to victory. Medical experts in the U.S.A. are more and more emphatic on the baneful effects of hard-punches which severely impair bodily functions.

Finally if the spectators contribute to the money-prize, they also contribute to the savageness of the fight and share in the brutal display. They leave the stadium with impaired humaneness. Cockfights, bull-fights, fox-hunting are criticised because of their unwholesome influence on the finer feelings of the spectators and of the insufficiently motivated sufferings inflicted on animals. Brutish emotionalism is hardly a civilised pursuit in leisure hours.

### *India's Opportunity*

Bodily violence is regrettable enough when needed for self-defence. All over the world praise-worthy efforts are made to prevent violence and war. Yet, with remarkable inconsistency, there grows a popular reversion to primitive behaviour. Nations develop medical services, popularise wonder drugs and cures, punish the least assault against bodily integrity, and at the same time people, even in the highest spheres, grow callous in their respect for human life; propaganda for abortion, euthanasia, brutish-boxing, never-racking entertainments and the like betray a lack of sound principles and virtuous consistency in public opinion.

India with her inherited cult for non-violence can do much to foster humaneness throughout the world. Let not up-to-date fads stunt her finer feelings and dissipate her immense possibilities for good.

A. L.



## A PILGRIMAGE TO ASSISI

The readers of "Social Action" will not, I trust, think that I am striking too personal a note if I greet them after a long absence in Europe and America with a brief article devoted to the description of a visit to Assisi and the shrines which are associated with the life and friendships of St. Francis. Many of the things I saw and heard in the course of the last few months — the discussions in the UNO General Assembly, particularly in the Third or Social Committee wherein I represented our country, the Schools of Social Service in the different Universities of America which I visited after the General Assembly, and the talks with leaders of social service education there and in Europe, — will I hope be of use to the work of the Institute and for the cause of Catholic social work in general. My visit to the Indian settlers in Jamaica and Trinidad was also a memorable experience. Next month I shall write briefly something of what I saw of them, of their faithful remembrance of the Motherland, affection with which they welcome visitors from India, and of their social and economic problems of their hopes and aspirations. But of all these visits and contacts, I do not hesitate to say that the day spent in Assisi has left the most vivid impressions. The thoughts which it inspired are so closely connected with the preoccupations with social problems which today engage the minds of all earnest people. That is my excuse for asking the attention of the readers of "Social Action" to this topic.

I went to Assisi from Rome by one of the buses of the Italian Company of Tourism whose service is excellent from every point of view. I had as companion Fr. Saverimuthu, S. J., now Professor of Philosophy at Shembaganur, who had just then completed his course for a Doctorate in the Gregorian University and whose knowledge of Italian and things Italian were of the greatest use to me. The journey was rendered still more agreeable by the presence



among the passengers of Sir Arnold Lunn, the distinguished convert and writer whose wide knowledge and experience and varied contacts made his conversation fascinating. Our journey lay up the ridge of the Apennines and then down by a gradual descent, the road winding through beautiful valleys and skirting hills crested with castles and churches of historic interest. We passed also the exquisitely beautiful waters of the Clitumnus and almost held our breath at their crystalline purity and transparency. We made our swift journey in May, under a clear Italian sky, and exhilarated by its brilliant sunshine, and reached Assisi nestling among the hills of Umbria, sometime before noon.

There were but a few hours before us to make the round of the Churches which we wanted to see. We went first to the great Church of St. Francis which contains the tomb of the Saint and some of the finest examples of Franciscan art. The tomb is in the crypt and its stern simplicity is not hidden by any mistaken lavishness in the altar encasing it or the votive offerings around it. It is a hallowed spot where silence reigns in an atmosphere of prayer and lowliness. Above the crypt is what is known as the lower Church, a massive Roman construction covered with remarkable frescoes, the most memorable being the celebrated portrait of St. Francis by Cimabue a marvellous combination of austerity and gentleness, and the fresco by Pietro Lorenzetti of the Blessed Virgin, St. John the Evangelist and St. Francis. It is impossible to imagine the beauty of features and serenity of expression to match this fresco. It haunts the memory once seen. The main Church over the lower church is a Gothic construction and is of imposing proportions. The frescoes by Giotto on the chief events of the life of the saint and those by Cimabue on Old and New Testament subjects make this Church one of the supreme examples of religious art.

From this Church which no one can visit without feeling something of the spell which the spirit of St. Francis casts upon all those who come in contact with him, we went

to the celebrated church of St. Damien, one of the churches which the youthful Francis repaired with his own hands. Here one breathes the atmosphere in which the kindred spirit of St. Clare was nurtured. Everything here speaks of poverty and renunciation — the cloister, the rude refectory where Clare and her sisters lived, the little chapel where they worshipped, the bare and forbidding room where she died. Bare, rude and forbidding undoubtedly, but all transformed to the eyes of a reverent beholder by the ardour and exultation of spirit which total renunciation fosters and fans, an ardour that swept through Christendom seven centuries ago like a purifying flame.

From San Damiano, redolent with memories of St. Clare to the tomb of St. Clare was a natural move. Its centre of attraction is the incorrupt body of Clare exposed to the veneration of the faithful in a magnificent case. But in spite of this there is about the Church — its architecture, its decoration — a simplicity and purity of outline which reveals the authentic Franciscan spirit. From this church we wound up to the imposing heights of Mount Subasio, several miles away, and visited the Hermitage or mountain caves known as the Carceri where St. Francis and some of his earliest companions used to retire to pray. Later on St. Bernardine of Sienna built a convent with cells scooped out of the rock as narrow and austere as the half open caves outside, which Francis had first used. But over the ruggedness of it all broods the sweet spirit of Francis because this was the scene of that unforgettable idyll of his preaching to the birds. Overlooking the gorge outside the convent is the ancient ilex or holm oak on the branches of which the little brothers of Francis alighted to listen to the praises of their Maker.

And finally, out on the plain and far from the sanctuaries in the heights, the great basilica of the Portiuncula, Basilica de Santa degli Angeli, dominating the convents, shrines and dwellings that cluster around it. This modern basilica was built around the little church of the Portiun-

cula which Francis renovated and where he lived for several years. It was there that he secured from Our Lady the Indulgence which goes by the name of Portiuncula. The ancient convent, cloisters, chapels and cells and gardens which are linked up with this Basilica, are all associated with some of the most striking events in the life of the saint. Enclosed within the precincts of the Basilica and near the sanctuary is the spot where the saint rendered his soul to God.

No one who goes to Assisi and moves in and breathes the atmosphere which the memory of Francis and Clare has created there, can escape the compelling force of the ideals which animated them and made their lives a perfect miracle of the love of God and man. Francis realised as few other men that the heart of the message of Jesus was love, love of God and love for God's creation. He saw that avarice, the passion for wealth and all that it brings — power and comfort — were the great enemy of love and the sower of discord; he saw that it was impossible to love God and men as they deserved unless there was detachment from the goods of the world and the desire for those spiritual riches which the worm and moth cannot destroy. Hence his worship of Lady Poverty and his passionate love of the poor, the sick, the abandoned of all kinds. I do not know whether he envisaged the "social problem" as we see it in all its complexity. But he saw that in some form or other "the poor we shall always have with us"; and that there would be no harmony and love within the human family unless the rich were, for the sake of a greater good, content to part with or share their riches; and unless the poor also for the sake of the greater good learnt contentment and joy in spite of material hardness of their lives. With this message of universal love and earthly detachment he revitalized Christendom and sent a breath of life and hope among the nations that formed the variegated pattern of medieval Europe. We too at the present day are engaged in solving the problems created by greed and the

desire to dominate. We too want to give life and hope to a Society sick to death because of injustice and hatred. We want a better distribution of wealth and greater consideration for the worker and for the propertyless masses. The Communists propose the solution wholly materialistic in its content and tyrannical in its method of execution. They want social peace by destruction, the peace of the wilderness. The democratic countries propose solutions certainly more acceptable — progress through freedom, improved standards of life, and increased production by the accelerating the rhythm of private production. And orally at least they pay homage to spiritual values and appeal to Christian ideals. But very often the ideal beneath their solutions is one of a purely material well being and the abundance they seek is secured by multiplying human wants, and increasing human activity to meet them. Very few indeed seem to realise that there is no solution for the social and economic problem except through the "cult of poverty" if not in the heroic degree of Francis and his companions at least by the spirit of detachment, by the love of simple and austere ways, and on the foundation of unselfishness thus built up, by the love of heavenly things.

Not less apposite and not less necessary is another aspect of the life and spirit of Francis. Man has a craving for beauty and a love for all beautiful things. The problems of man's life must be solved in an integrated manner so as to embrace the substance of his activity in all its aspects. In solving the social problem we must see to it that his spiritual and material needs are satisfied and his cultural and aesthetic cravings fulfilled. His individual and social activity must tend to the preservation of beauty and the creation of new forms of beauty. Our industrial civilization tends to confound beauty with lavishness and waste, refinement with comfort. Our methods of production do not create forms of beauty, they tend to pile up monsters of hideousness. Ruskin foresaw this danger and inveighed against it with passion. But Francis of Assisi knew how to

combine beauty with simplicity and poverty. He loved the beauty of creation as few men have done. On all his words and gestures, on his attitude to sun and sky, birds, flowers and flowing waters, there is the stamp of a supreme grace and purity. The painters of the Franciscan school from Cimabue and Giotto to Fra Angelico, are among the supreme creators of artistic beauty. If we are to bring love and grace and beauty into human life we must assimilate more and more the spirit of Francis of Assisi. That spirit is not confined to any school or particular religious family in the Church. It is the spirit of the Gospel, it is the spirit of Jesus. It is the spirit that is reflected in the thousand facets of Catholic teaching, and Catholic life.

*J. D'Souza.*



## WHY JOIN YOUR UNION ?

Social principles serve little purpose and are regarded as little better than platitudes unless an attempt is made to apply them to concrete cases. In this context, the recent discussion in the press as to the obligation and the utility in joining a trade union is welcome. Discussion should, like a good thunderstorm, clear the air ; let us hope that this will be the result of the present controversy.

A very brief summary of the nature of trade unions will be helpful in assessing both sides of the debate. Trade unions are necessary and exist of their own right ; the worker has the right to a just wage, security and treatment in keeping with human dignity ; such benefits he cannot obtain by himself individually, but only in association with others. In forming unions workers are defending their inherent right to a decent livelihood both for themselves and for their families. Because in the past men did not get their just rights, they were obliged to form

unions as a means of self-protection. In unity strength, is the lesson of the last one hundred and fifty years ; the isolated individual is a puny, helpless creature before the colossal might of modern industry and it is only by collective bargaining that the individual worker can hope to obtain justice. Through his union the individual has a chance of striking a fair bargain because the union is better informed about prices and conditions and can meet the employer on equal terms. Unions besides protecting the worker also help to see that its members keep the terms of their contract with the employer, and serve as a channel through which management and labour can discuss and settle their mutual difficulties in a friendly way. All this is a commonplace of Catholic social teaching and can be found in the Church's pronouncements on social doctrine.

To complete the picture we must shade in the dark patches which have become more conspicuous in recent years. Where labour has been long and fully organised, it has, in some cases, constituted itself into such a force as to form a monopoly which can enforce unjust and unreasonable demands and bring lakhs of workers out on strikes that are a disaster both to industry and the nation. Unions are sometimes known to seek their own interests with complete disregard for those of the consumer and the general public ; their leaders sometimes work for their own selfish advantage at the expense of both the worker and the employer ; unions are used as tools by this or that political party which puts its own interests before those of the unionists, even if it does not work against them. Where unionism has reached manhood, it should show the maturity and balanced judgement of a full-grown man. Pius XII, in his address to the Italian workers points out the danger of irresponsible action on the part of unions : "if ever they should aim at exclusive domination in the state and in society, if they should seek to exercise absolute power over the worker, if they should reject the strict sense of justice and sincere good will to collaborate with

the other social classes, they would betray the expectations and the hopes which every honest and conscientious worker places in them."

However, in spite of these disadvantages, the good points definitely outweigh the bad: unionism has considerably bettered the position of the worker and in most countries it still remains his greatest safeguard against exploitation. Those who are prone to dwell over much on the dark side of unionism would do well to meditate on the following passage: "If the practices of some labour unions are bad, this is probably because people with high Christian ideals and a spirit of apostolic service have not joined the union or, if they are union members, they have not taken the time and the trouble needed to gain the necessary knowledge to be given positions of responsibility."<sup>1</sup> Where efforts to get enlightened labour leaders elected have succeeded, workers and employers usually agree that their mutual interests are best served by collaboration and not by embittered contests of strength. "To obtain the desired concord between labour and capital," says the present Pontiff, "recourse is had to the professional organization and the labour union, understood not as weapons destined exclusively for a defensive or offensive war which would provoke reactions and reprisals, not as a flowing river which submerges and separates, but rather as a bridge to unite these groups."

Let us now turn to the Indian scene and examine the situation there. For the most part labour is unorganised: of agricultural labour far and away the greatest part cannot be said to have a semblance of organisation at all, while only a part of those engaged in other industries are in unions, and even in this case, membership fluctuates greatly according as benefits are in the immediate offing or not. Employers, in general, give no more than they are forced to, while an excess of manpower and the constant threat

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<sup>1</sup> E. J. Ross, *Sound Social Living*, p. 298.

of unemployment makes labour weak and management strong. We are aware that there is the other side of the picture which brings out the faults of labour : inefficiency, a notable increase in the number of disputes, the instability of labour, largely drawn from villages and making a very high annual turnover, absenteeism, unreasonable demands and a docility to follow demagogues and trouble-makers, but the over-all picture is of a weak, disorganised labour force, rarely strong enough to enforce its just demands, and being but a very weak counterpart of organised labour in the West. The conclusion is that if the Church could declare unions necessary for the European conditions of 1929 (as she did in the Lille letter ; this decision has nothing to do with the world slump which was shortly to follow), still more so are they necessary for the India of 1952. We may even go a step further and state that the cause of labour trouble in the country today does not arise from the existence of unions, but because labour is not organised or, where organised, because it is organised along the wrong lines.

Having outlined the situation, we can now put the question : "Must I join my union ?" The answer is that unless your union is nothing but a tool of a ruthless party out to destroy true liberty and impose a crushing tyranny on all, then you should join your union. Among the reasons for taking this decision are the following : although I myself may get nothing out of my union in its *present* state than continual annoyance and a feeling of frustration, yet if I, and the many like me who could do something to improve my union, keep out of it, all other members and the labour movement in general suffer from my action. In other words, I must sacrifice my own convenience for the common good of my fellow workers, just as the soldier must be ready to sacrifice his life for his country, and a good doctor or devoted statesman sacrifice their health for a common cause. This obligation to join one's union and make a sacrifice for the common good of the working class



is well brought out by the following parallel which has more force than a mere comparison. When a country is passing through a crisis at the time of a general election and subversive forces are trying to set up a tyrannical government, it is the duty of every citizen with a vote to go to the polls and vote against such a party. This Pius XII made very clear during the Italian elections when he stated that under pain of grievous sin Catholics must go and vote to overthrow the Communist menace. Now if there is an obligation to join one's union because the union movement is weak, there is an even stronger obligation to join when, as in this country, Communists are straining every nerve to control the unions.

Another parallel, less strong than the above, can be found in the justification of the 'closed shop.' In this practice an employer may hire and employ union members only. This means that to get a job I must be a union member. It is argued against the closed shop that it unlawfully restricts the rights of employer and of non-union worker. Now although the closed shop cannot always be justified, and may be the occasion of serious abuse, there are cases where its practice can be upheld. To apply this to our problem, if in certain cases one man in justice be forced to join a union to get a job because though this is a very serious restriction of personal liberty, it is the best way to safeguard the workers' interests, surely then one may be obliged to join one's union in cases where personal liberty is much less restricted, but where the need for union security is very great, as at present in India. It is important to note why the closed shop may be justified. According to a very moderate opinion it is permissible when "a situation may arise where respect for vital rights of the workers by the employers can be secured only through their united action: then the rights of the group may prevail against those of the individual"<sup>2</sup> And another specialist states:

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<sup>2</sup> J. Messner, *Social Ethics*, p. 366.

"The right of any worker to a job must be interpreted against the background of this social fact. (The history of 150 years of struggle to establish workers' rights.). Accordingly, instead of talking about the right of a worker to join or not to join a union, would it not seem more appropriate and more practical, to discuss a possible duty to join his fellows in a spirit of fraternal solidarity? At any rate, where the closed shop is essential to a union's security, I do not believe that the union violates the worker's right to a job by demanding that he join the union."<sup>3</sup> And "Social justice and the common good may demand that a minority group of workers cede personal privileges to the welfare of all concerned. Most of the benefits and privileges enjoyed by non-unionists were not obtained by them through their own individual efforts, but through the bargaining power of the union as an organization. If, then, the closed shop is a practical necessity for the common good of all workers in the shop, private views and preferences of the individuals and minority groups should, it seems, give way to the priority of the common good of all workers as a body."<sup>4</sup>

The argument, then, for the justification of the closed shop in certain cases is based on the principle that I must sacrifice my personal privileges for the common good of the group. This is but an application of the very same reasoning why I should join my union. The last quotation above gives the added argument that I ought to join my union since I enjoy the benefits my union has won without giving anything in return for these hard-won advantages.

We will give one more example to emphasise the point from the purpose of the Association of Catholic Trade-Unionists (ACTU). (N.B. This is *not* a trade union, but

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<sup>3</sup> Benjamin L. Masse, "Does the Closed Shop Destroy the Right to work?" *America*, vol. LXVI, No. 16.

<sup>4</sup> C. N. Bittle, *Man and Morals*, pp. 483-84. Cf. also, J. L. Toner, *The Closed Shop*.

an association of Catholic workers who are engaged in different unions, according to their trade.) This Association exists to bring Catholics into trade unions, from which purpose it is clear that joining one's union is very much encouraged.<sup>5</sup> Other aims of ACTU are to make Catholics in unions an organised force that will permeate their unions with the understanding and practice of justice and charity towards all workers and all classes, to spread the knowledge of Catholic social teaching so that all may know the Church manifests a genuine care of the worker's needs and is a firm upholder of his rights. Once again we see that we are exhorted to join our unions, not because these associations are models of rectitude, not even primarily for the benefits we may get from joining, but to influence our union to develop along the right lines for the benefit of the working class and of the nation, by the help of sound Catholic social principles which catholic unionists alone know.

If each of us lived in a vacuum, cut off from everybody else, I could argue that unions were no business of mine. But this is not the case; every man, as a social being, has obligations towards society which he cannot refuse to acknowledge without going contrary to his true nature: his acts have repercussions on others as they have on him. For a Christian the argument is even stronger: we are all

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<sup>5</sup> We do not treat here of forming Catholic unions since the question is hardly applicable to present conditions and circumstances in India. Briefly, papal directions on this point are: where possible, Catholic unions should be formed; where this is not possible, Catholics may join non-Catholic unions provided they are not subversive of Catholic principles. Cf. for instance, *A Code of Social Principles*, No. 114.

Catholics are aware they cannot join a Communist Union. But this should not lead them to abandon a non-communist union into which a few active Communists have infiltrated and caused a disturbance out of proportion to their numbers. Such a situation is an opportunity to react and drive the Communists out of their positions.

members, one of another and no Christian can say : "I am not my brother's keeper," nor can he hypocritically wash his hands of all responsibility for acts done in the name of the whole community of which he is a member. Many do not vote alleging the corruption of politicians as an excuse. The Church has condemned this attitude and pointed out that the seriousness of the times and the danger coming from the forces of evil make it an obligation to vote. Many do not join their union, giving as a reason for this that their union is corrupt and dominated by party politics ; the solution is to get into your union and change what is wrong. Many do not vote, thinking that one vote cannot make any difference, but the number of people who think thus is so great that elections are lost through the want of such votes. Many think : "It cannot make any difference if I keep out of my union." But the number of those who think thus is so great that as a consequence of their abstention, the union falls into the hands of undesirable elements. If you do not vote and a rascal is elected, you cannot say : "It's not my fault, since I did not vote for him." You should have voted against him. When your union is corrupt you cannot disclaim responsibility by saying "I didn't corrupt it." You, and others like you, should be in your union to prevent corruption. Remember that if you are a Catholic you have much to offer. Even men of goodwill go astray because they have not got the guidance of Christian social principles. You know—at least you *should* know — those principles, and in the light of them can do much to guide the decisions of your union. But if you, and those like you, are not in your union, you are not only partly responsible for the wrong done by your union, but you cannot blame non-Catholics if they act in ignorance of Catholic social principles which *you* have neglected to teach them. Owing to the fact that many do not join their union, or if members, do not attend union meetings, determined and well-trained groups, usually Communists, control the local union. Then owing to the

general apathy, these are elected to the higher offices and in the end the whole Union falls into the hands of those whose policy is abhorrent to the majority who would never have allowed their union to be captured in this way had they been better informed. And who are better suited to give sound advice and point out the hidden, insidious dangers than well-trained Catholic unionists who make a profession of defending social justice? One cannot look with complacency on those who keep out of their unions and then wring their hands and shriek in horror at the misdeeds of unionism.

Last century, the great Bishop of Mainz, Dr. Ketteler, urged the German Catholics to join non-Catholic unions even though their leaders were mainly motivated by anti-Christian motives. His advice is most appropriate to our conditions and the case under discussion and we could not do better than conclude by quoting this great social pioneer.

"It would be a great folly on our part if we kept aloof from this movement (unionism) merely because it happens at present to be promoted chiefly by men who are hostile to Christianity. The air remains God's air though breathed by an atheist, and the bread we eat is no less the nourishment provided for us by God though kneaded by an unbeliever. It is the same with unionism. It is an idea that rests on the divine order of things and is essentially Christian, though the men who favour it most do not recognise the finger of God in it and often turn it to a wicked use.

"Unionism, however, is not merely legitimate in itself and worthy of our support, but Christianity alone commands the indispensable elements for directing it properly and making it a real and lasting benefit to the working class. Just as the great truths that uplift and educate the workingman, his individuality and personality, are Christian truths, so also Christianity has the great ideals and living forces capable of imparting life and vigour to the workingmen's associations."

A Nevett.



## GOOD MONSIEUR HARMEL

(Continued)

Harmel was prepared to assist any social work, and always made a distinctive contribution. He willingly supported the 'Union of Catholic Clubs' (*Oeuvre des Cercles Catholiques*) which gathered together leaders of all classes and was intent on solving the social problem. It accepted the direction of Albert de Mun and the doctrine of de La Tour du Pin; Harmel established with both of them a most intimate friendship which did not prevent heroic discussions and well-marked differences. The fortunes of the Union fluctuated largely with fluctuating circumstances and varied personalities; there were temperamental dissonances, doctrinal differences and political divergences. Many employers shunned cooperation with workers and advocated protection and patronage. Intellectual temperaments were satisfied with ideologies, a type which, in the words of E. Dimnet, is persuaded that "If one is right in what one thinks, somebody else is sure to do the humdrum work of carrying out the thought." Some of the leaders held that the State should be a benevolent watchman, others pleaded for a State-providence. Some maintained that a monarchy was the only plank of salvation, others had sincerely rallied to the republic, etc.

What calls for our attention is the contribution of Harmel to the work of a Union. As he gathered experience, he was more and more insistent on co-operation between workers and employers. No patronage, for God's sake! Let us not run Workers' Councils as Sunday Clubs for school-boys! What we must set up is the government of the workers associations by the workers themselves.

Another of Harmel's contributions was the broadening of the scope of the Union. As de Mun writes in his *Ma Vocation Sociale*, the Union "had in 1873 reached only artisans and clerks; it was hardly spread to the countryside. The example of Harmel opened new horizons.....

We found in the sphere of industry a superb confirmation of the principles we had stated at first. A splendid future was open to our ambitions ; our minds, turned hereafter towards the working masses, had of necessity to seek a solution of their problems. From then onwards the solution was to be sought in social legislation and in corporative organisation."

The sharpest divergences among the leaders were in regard to the method of organisation and work. Marquess de La Tour du Pin was all for study, Harmel for action. Both agreed that study and action were necessary, the divergence was a matter of emphasis and dosage. Harmel wanted it light enough to prevent going the wrong way, but once that amount of doctrine was secured, action, trial and error method, history and experience. "In economics if the head nears the heavens, the feet must remain on the earth."

The Union had three sections: propaganda, finance, organisation. A fourth was added, education with a Study Board (Conseil d'Etudes) ; this last section was given a prominence deplored by Harmel: endless discussions on principles, a monthly periodical exclusively devoted to theories, planning, mental constructions, etc. Harmel used to exclaim: "We are a work, we are not a school. Action is our purpose. Why have those excursions into the realm of the absolute and seek, a priori solutions?" He was keen on study, but study of practical questions: labour contract, constant level of wages, bonus, insurance, partnership problems. All his life he felt shy of theories and theoreticians. Theories lead people to believe that theorizing is working. Theories divide. Action, always action, like O'Connell who never did anything else, Contact with workmen; the running of workers' associations would teach more than all the theories in the world." Such were his views.

"Get your sections in working order. You are a soldier, you'll never be a philosopher. Leave all that talk to the Byzantines who have nothing else to do when the house is

on fire." "If the Catholic Church had had a Study Board the Apostles would never have converted anybody, or at most a few only." "Moreover what we have is not exactly a Study Board, it is rather an Oracle Board." "All these good folks who are not employers reason like books. But when they come to apply their theories, they drift into the impossible or the ridiculous. Let them leave people who have some practice the trouble of drawing conclusions which they themselves fail to comprehend." "A laboratory is the proper thing for a factory, but it should not be built in the machine-room." "With your theorizing, you will kill work."

Most speeches gave that outlook and were couched in that style. It would be out of place to analyse his views here, focus them and amend them suitably. In the long run, the studies of the Union were helpful if not immediately, at any rate in the following decades. Moreover, and here we see that Harmel's ardour somewhat obscured his vision, many of the 'conclusions' were ideas worked out of his very concrete methods and experiments. Several leaders, like Mr. de la Guillioniere, would say: "The only real social doctrine we learned came out of the Harmel-de la Tour du Pin tournament." It was indeed a tournament in knightly style, even if the pen was as sharp as a word, and the sword was always buttoned. The jousts never wrecked those noble friendships. Harmel used to repeat: "I most heartily love those whom I fight against. I esteem and admire them." "I would be sorry to be in your way, but I love you so much that I am not sorry to hurt you a little." *Magis amica veritas.*

Harmel was diffident of political work and state intervention; yet when de Mun was elected to Parliament, Harmel nursed some hope that much could be done. He was disappointed. de Mun was a lone warrior fighting on behalf of the workers; moreover he made a mistake when displaying his royalist loyalty in a speech of which Leo XIII publicly disapproved. Harmel himself never wanted to



have monarchism and social reform confused or even linked together ; it would be harmful both for the royalist cause and for the workers' cause. What he kept urging was his plan of industrial organisation, and he felt happy beyond words when a resolution of his raised prolonged applause at the Autun Congress (1892) : "The directors of Catholic Workers Organisations unanimously consider that the corporative regime is the only remedy to the evils due to the actual anarchical conditions. This regime has three distinct features : a moral bond, freely agreed to, between employers and employees : a material bond between them through the common and inalienable corporative patrimony ; a fraternity bond between the enterprises united within the corporation. Moreover an official status for the corporation should be obtained from the State. This corporative regime can exist in a single undertaking as is done in Val des Bois or it may be created between similar enterprises through unions which would be the starting point of a general movement of moral and material prosperity in large-scale industries. Such corporations should be established everywhere so as to prepare a corporative regime which is the only way of solving the social problem." The resolution was approved ; "heads and hearts were in unison," Harmel said. Alas ! it was not long before the resolution was challenged by facts. Bandits sacked the establishments of Montceau and the anti-religious press shouted : "There you have the clericals tasting their aristocratic socialism. In this pillage, what a revenge on Autun." They feigned to ignore that the arson had been planned by militant Marxists. Moreover, as Harmel pointed out immediately, "the Montceau factories were not organised on a corporative basis. It was no better than a schoolboys club ; the workers had not been grouped or associated for the common task, and in their isolation were the easy prey of anti-social propaganda. The corporative system supposes a common administration of common interests." Mr. de Mun himself at the general meeting of the Union (1884) mentioned that Mr. Chagot, the employer, had admitted the

failure of his method, and paid due tribute to Harmel's. "The Val des Bois experiment has deepened my convictions. It was the lesson of this patient experiment that I embodied in my parliamentary speech on professional trade-unions in 1883."

As early as 1879 Leo XIII had written: "All masters and workers of large factories should follow the example of Val des Bois"; in 1887 he repeated: "Let us have many Harmels." Many Catholic industrialists were only too keen on getting acquainted with a method that might solve the social problems, and they invited Harmel for meetings and speeches. He was prompt in answering all invitations.

The most unpleasant, if the first, task was to disturb the conscience of capitalists and liberals. In those days as well as today, many an employer closed his eyes to social principles because they are troublesome. Why bring principles in factory organisation? Why mix religion and business? Harmel countered in no minced words: "Anybody who has authority over men is responsible for the soul of these men. And he is responsible to God. . . . It is a duty of strict justice to give the workmen a fair wage; who ever violates this duty is guilty of a crime which the Church lists among those that cry to heaven for vengeance. But who could pretend that the employer's duty for the soul of his workmen is less stringent? Who would deny this is part and parcel of the salary a worker should expect from his employer?" Moreover there is the employer's responsibility towards society: "Machinery and factory have come to break up the harmony of the home. The employer has taken the child into the factory and deprived it of paternal protection; has he not to replace the father? And vis-a-vis society, is he not bound to make up in all possible ways for the disorders created by the factory?" He had said so in the Nantes Congress of 1873; he was to repeat the same hundreds of times in all the industrial centres, Lille, Roubaix, Marseilles, Rouen, etc., etc. All his harangues often terminated with a slogan of his that became famous: "Bad employers are pilloried in hell".

There were some risks in approaching employers with an argument about their austere social duty, but "did he not owe them full truth? By way of getting some support for his words, he had suggested the idea of a Catechism for employers. As happens to those who suggest good ideas, he was told to write the first draft; benevolent theologians revised it and by 1886 the Catechism was published. "A perfect book", said Fr. Lehmkuhl; "a master-piece," said Fr. Costa-Rosetti. It was published as 'edited by Leon Harmel' and in the editorial view it was meant for seminarists, confessors and religious rather than for employers who might not feel much inclined to read it'.

The very success of Harmel's campaign, the spread of his ideas, the growing number of his contacts and hearers, brought him a crop of incidents which could only ruffle his temperament; objections, doctrinal differences, side-issues, etc., continually came up for endless distasteful discussions. Harmel was sorely tried; there was so much to do and so little time in which to do it that he felt impatient of controversies. He had a general intuition of what was to be done here and now, and was always under the pressure of his faith and charity. Whether it was a duty of justice or equity or charity, whether it was safer to range it within the field of state intervention or of private initiative, etc.: such questions of theory had little importance, at least immediately, and the work had to be done immediately. He would gladly leave to philosophers and theologians all the talent, honour and leisure of sorting out these problems and ranging their answers in their proper categories.

What was crucial for him was to make out what was actually to be taken up today, and to take it up today. What was equally important with him was the method of work; this problem of method in social rehabilitation was the main source of his divergences with his fellow-industrialists of Northern France. He fully acknowledged their splendid social effort, and he paid due homage to their generous initiatives and remarkable achievements (Lille University, etc.). But through intuition and experience, he

was convinced and wanted all to be convinced that the workers had to be directly associated with any effort at social rehabilitation. He wanted the Church to come and "baptize democracy, that wild heroine" as Fr. Ventura said. Workmen had to be emancipated by workmen; this was his leading principles since 1870. The method had this other advantage, that all associations would be enabled to live thanks to economic institutions for workmen. From 1885 he had launched works of assistance, and after thirty years was not yet convinced that they were decisively useful. The only efficacious way was to bring out and educate the initiative of the workmen themselves, help them to educate themselves and to educate the others: it was the apostolate of workmen by workmen.

Employers who ignore or fear the initiative of workmen are "like so many Louis XIV's; the associations they start and patronise are nothing but Sunday Clubs (patronages; popular education frightens them as if it were a monster." Some used to object: "Well, if workmen begin to think by themselves, what is going to happen to us? We won't be masters any more." Even Henri Bayart, a prominent social worker and a disciple of Harmel, felt shy of Harmel's popular lectures and social education. Harmel had a longer sight and a broader vision. He knew that if responsibility had to be strengthened at the top, it had to be introduced at the lower levels. There could be no training to responsibility without the exercise of responsibility. Orders if they were to be obeyed had to be understood, and they had to be accepted willingly. Slaves never obey.

Leon confessed that he had inherited his method from his father, James Joseph. "After having noted that his personal and direct influence could not dissipate the workmen's diffidence, he hid himself, but as the heart is hidden in the chest, whilst supplying the motive power to all the limbs. The employer had to become the heart of the undertaking. In the words of Cardinal Vanutelli, "Harmel's democracy was the Gospel's democracy." A. Lallemand.

(to be continued)

## A NEW SOCIAL FORCE

Only a few decades ago, it was generally accepted that the application of an ethical or moral standard to solve the problems of life was taboo. And this narrow prejudice would have continued, had not two world wars intervened to rouse men out of their complacency, and make them aware of the futility of their materialistic prescriptions for the cure of a sick world. The Second World War, in particular, acted like a fiery catharsis to compel the agnostics to recognise the inherent exigencies of the human individual. One of the most important of these was the spiritual side of human nature that had been woefully abandoned and almost denied.

The popularity of the Moral Rearmament Movement both in Europe and America is due to the growing awareness of this fact, despite the inherent weaknesses of the system. The Movement was started by Frank Buchman, one-time Lutheran Minister, who was born in 1878 in Pennsylvania. In 1909, in Princeton, New Jersey, Buchman had founded the 'First Century Christian Fellowship'. But it was only when he migrated to Oxford that he really began to gain the influence with which his name is associated today. It was in Oxford that he adopted the title 'Oxford Group Movement' to designate his new experiment in the social sphere. The Oxford Group Movement must be carefully distinguished from the famous Oxford Movement of nearly a century ago, which was led by Newman, Keble and Pusey and which resulted in Newman's conversion to Rome. Buchman has tried to make use of the associations the former movement still inspires in the minds of people to boost up his own. Today however Buchmanism has assumed a new title; it is known as the Moral Rearmament Movement.

The origin of the Movement may be traced to Buchman's peculiar spiritual experiences. When invited to the Disarmament Conference in 1921, he suddenly quit the Committee because he had heard an interior voice telling

him to resign. It was at that moment that he received a vivid intuition that man must first be transformed interiorly before war can be banished from this world. In a speech made on June 4th, 1950, Buchman relates: "One day I discovered all the pride, the egoism and the sins that held me captive. All my life seemed to be centred round my own person. If I wished to change, it was this huge "Ego" of mine, that needed to disappear. I found that I had nurtured feelings of resentment against six individuals in my heart. I prayed to God to change me. He asked me to get reconciled with those six men. I obeyed and wrote six letters of apology. That very day, God used me to change the life of a friend. I now know that if I were to obey God, I could perform miracles. I came to grasp this wonderful truth. *When a man listens, God speaks; when a man obeys, God acts; when men change, the world is changed.* This is the revolutionary way that I have walked for the last 46 years".

Buchman is not afraid to assert that the root cause of our present distress is moral. People need to rearm themselves not with machine guns and atom bombs but morally. The restoration of morality is the indispensable condition for the restoration of our economy and peaceful social life. Men must return to the practice of those elementary virtues that they were taught at their mother's knees. These are the "four absolutes"; honesty, purity, disinterestedness and love. Men who live up to these four absolutes will be able to generate a power that will break down the barriers of hate and cruelty that dominate our world.

Merely telling people that they must live moral lives will achieve little unless they pass through a spiritual experience that will transform their mental outlook. Buchman strongly believes in making a man pass through a profound emotional experience so as to become keenly aware of his relation to God. The process of change is a direct one, involving an intense emotional shock that transforms the patient on the instant. It is known as 'life-changing'.

This is not something new ; the same method has been in use among the Quakers for a long time. But Buchman has made 'lifechanging' the spearhead of his movement for disarming the world and settling its problems without resort to the terrifying weapons of a modern war.

According to Buchman, God can change the world and He is desirous of doing so, but men must listen to His voice and follow His dictates. If men are willing to do so, then the world will soon be transformed. God has a plan for each nation to bring about the peace that we so ardently long for. And God's plan is much more efficacious than any political planning or diplomatic arrangements.

Buchman's plans for spreading his ideas on the European Continent suffered a set-back when the Second World War broke out in 1939. But in 1946, a Moral Rearmament Centre was opened out at Caux-sous-Montreux in Switzerland. A vast hotel was bought and furnished by Buchman's supporters. Its former name 'Caux Palace' has been changed to 'Mountain House'. All sorts of people have made a pilgrimage to Caux. Ministers of State, parliamentarians, industrialists, trade unionists, workingmen, rabid Marxists, militant Communists, men and women with difficulties in their daily lives, people of every religious belief. There is no distinction of caste or creed ; all are equally welcomed. In fact the warm welcome that one receives at Caux has become proverbial. In spite of its hugeness, no servants are employed at Caux. The pilgrims help the permanent staff in doing the work of the house. The spirit of fraternal charity is remarkable and leaves a deep impression on everyone who has visited Caux.

The transformation of the pilgrim takes place during the meetings, which take place twice a day. Members of the audience relate their spiritual experiences with a naivete that at first shocks the listener but disarms him soon enough into persuading him to do the same. The mutual relation of such spiritual experience is known as 'sharing'. It often consists of a public confession of faults. People

relate how they have failed in the observance of the 'four absolutes'. While the mind is being emptied the confessionalists await for 'guidance' or an impulse from God. It is on this impulse that they must act. If they are not sure, they must consult their companions.

At the meetings remarkable conversions have taken place. Journalists have been known to confess that they have ruined the character of an adversary and set about making amends on the spot. Men who have not paid their income-tax, or given a false statement, immediately set about making reparation in full. A man who has an enemy may at once write him a note of apology as the first step of reconciliation. The emotional shock experienced at these meetings is very intense, and often results in a complete change of moral outlook and habits. The transformation is generally rapid. The first cordial reception on entry into the 'paradise of Caux' is augmented by the exceptional personal confidences and intimacy that serve to draw the newcomer to unburden himself both privately and at the public meetings. Even over the dinner table, no other topic of conversation holds the eater's attention but the exchange of spiritual ideas and experiences. In this way the habitual reserve that takes so long to wear down elsewhere vanishes almost immediately at Caux. The recipient is thus prepared more quickly to receive the ideas of the Buchmanites.

Briefly the main thesis of the Moral Rearmament Movement may be stated in the following terms.

The present crisis in world affairs stems from the fact that men have turned their backs on God. The Movement places no trust on merely political or economic panaceas for world peace; it strongly holds that only by changing men can a changed world atmosphere be engendered. In order to build a new world, we need new men. At the same time, we must start by changing ourselves before we try to bring about a change in others. If we succeed in changing ourselves, we shall acquire the power of effecting a change in the lives of our neighbours. Men are changed



when they are brought to realise the relations in which they stand to the Divinity. They must freely and willingly focus their lives on God, and be ready to carry out His will in their regard. But to know God's will, they must listen to His voice in silence. Prayer for guidance and the spirit of recollection will eventually enable them to hear God's message, for it is in silence that God speaks. To know whether they are in the divine favour, they must examine their conduct with reference to the four absolutes; absolute honesty, perfect purity, utter disinterestedness, and intense charity.

In practice, one must constantly seek for light and guidance by prayer and recollection before every important action of the day. Members of the Movement must realise that they are not alone in their ascent to God. Every member, on leaving Caux, tries to gather round him ten other men whom he infuses with the spirit of the Movement. Each of them is expected to help the others to achieve the ideal of the four absolutes. In times of doubt and crisis, the companions must give guidance and consolation. No one is therefore alone in the fight. There are others ready to help. The mutual desire for moral change begets mutual co-operation. Such fraternal comradeship smooths the difficult path of the 'four absolutes' that lead to peace. The sublimation of the lower instincts in the service of an ideal forged during the time of great emotional stress is more easily secured and maintained.

Today the Moral Rearmament Movement is concentrating all its energies on the solution of the social problem. It sees in Communism the arch-enemy of the human race and the democratic tradition. It wishes to introduce the moral element into the relationship between management and labour. Some of its members have been requested to bring about peace in labour relations and have succeeded by basing their solution on the principles of the Movement. Both management and labour are initiated into the spirit and practices of the Movement and then persuaded to settle

their quarrels in peace and goodwill. The moral element needs to be emphasised in the world of industry; Buchman and his followers have had the courage to do it. That is the secret of their success.

At a first glance, the Moral Rearmament Movement seems to be a simple sure way of ridding the world of conflict and oppression both in the public and the private sector, in the world of industry and agriculture as well as in that of the nations. It has won millions of adherents in its cause. Its 'paradise' at Caux has produced remarkable conversions among the most varied types of men. In its fundamental approach to modern problems it is correct. Men have forgotten God and must return to Him, if they wish to enjoy the five freedoms, especially the freedom from fear. And the emphasis on the transformation of man before transformation of the world he lives in is a conclusion with which most thinking people heartily agree. But the point at issue is the process of transformation and its stability. In other words, is the conversion likely to persist after the emotional matrix that gave it birth has vanished?

To put men on the right track, the Buchmanites prefer to approach the divinity through some sort of direct contact. An intense emotional experience resulting from communication with the Supreme Being is ardently desired and earnestly sought for. Men must listen to His voice in silence; they must be prepared to receive and follow His message. But by what criterion can they be sure that they have received the divine message? Is the Supreme Being so anxious to communicate Himself in such a remarkable manner to every person who wishes to enjoy the experience of what a divine communication is like? And who is to tell the recipient whether it is really God speaking to him? Could it not be that the so-called divine message is the result of auto-suggestion? And could not the emotional upsurge felt on the occasion be due to group-suggestion and group-feeling? We know so little about the mental make-

up of the human being, that one must be extremely chary of passing judgement in such delicate matters. This is not the first time that men have claimed direct revelation from the Supreme Being. But past experience in such matters seems to show that there is here a vast field for self-deception and hypocrisy. Buchman has no criterion for judging of the truth or fallacy of these experiences. He only suggests that the recipient consult his fellows. He believes that they can provide him with the required guidance. If that is so, would not this be a case of the blind leading the blind?

Though the Moral Rearmament Movement might find favour with various religious denominations, precisely because it seeks to do away with differences in belief and secure co-operation by appealing to a few fundamental principles, the Roman Catholic Church can only regard such a course as a betrayal of Christianity. For though the fundamental principles of the Movement are Christian to the core, yet they are far from being the full message of Christianity. Christianity without Christ is simply unthinkable. It is like the husk without the cocoanut, the peel without the fruit, the shadow without the substance. The peculiar significance of Christianity is not what it has in common with other religions, but in the differences. These contain the special contribution of Christianity to men hungering for the truth and seeking for the light.

It is for this reason that Cardinal Schuster, Archbishop of Milan, has condemned the Moral Rearmament Movement as a danger both to non-Catholics, to whom it offers "a morality without dogma, without a principle of authority, without a supremely revealed faith," making them "sheep without a shepherd," and for Catholics, because, if they go to Caux, all they find is "a subjective pietism of the authentic Protestant stamp."

Besides the general belief in God and the determination to do His will, the Catholic Church insists that the world needs Christ and His redemption if it is to be saved.

God approaches man through His divine Son and through the Church. Man of his own strength can never live up to the ideals of the 'four absolutes'. He always stands in need of the grace of God, which is given him through the Sacraments. But the Moral Rearmament Movement bypasses these highly significant doctrines for the achievement of unity at any price. It welcomes anyone and everyone into its fold; and though it is true that it tries to make each person more fervent in the practice of his own religion, the end-result of the process is religious indifferentism. Is not the semblance of unity being bought at too high a price? Is the sacrifice worth it? And how long will the results of the sacrifice last? These questions hardly seem to bother the Buchmanites. They are out for results at the cheapest possible price. They are only busy with the short term process. They forget the long term achievement that is far more important.

The Moral Rearmament Movement seems to underestimate the real danger of the world situation today. Communism is not the only peril. Evil as such is a much vaster thing than Communism. And it is undoubtedly with evil as such that a moral movement should grapple. But the Moral Rearmament Movement has got mixed up with political issues. It has succumbed to the persistent wooing of the Capitalist world. It has now become a tool in the hands of the Capitalist group that form one plank in the Anti-Communist front. It busies itself in solving labour-management problems, but has grown suspect in the eyes of the workmen because of its affiliations with management. However as a movement that seeks to do away with war by the novel method of exclusively emphasising spiritual values, it still arouses the passionate sympathy of those who dread another war and are aware that force can never be the mother of peace. But the mystique of the Moral Rearmament Movement is embedded too deeply in hazy emotionalism. This is the real canker at the heart of the Movement. Only reason guided by faith can procure to mankind the peace it longs for.

*A. Fonseca*

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